



Hello everyone,

They say that: “It is good to look back on the Old Year but it is better to look forward to the New Year”. Looking back, I see that each year since it was launched in 2009 The Debenham Project has significantly grown and evolved, taking on new ideas and seeking to offer the best support that we can for family carers, and those they care for. Looking forward, I can already see that 2017 will bring yet more improvements and innovation in its services.

Firstly, we are planning to start a new service which is provisionally called “One to One”. Until now, the project has primarily supported people in a group setting – lunch clubs, Cameo, Carers Club, Info Café, Way Back When, Fit Club, etc. - and, other than our “transport for medical appointments” and “personal care and domestic support providers register”, we have not offered direct and continuing support on an individual basis. Several years ago Social Care funded a team of professional Dementia Advisors to provide this facility but it was not made a priority and was subsequently withdrawn. However, within the project, we know that, for many struggling families, the dementia advisor was critical in their avoiding or delaying major crises and critical hospital admissions. So, led by Paddy Fielder, we are setting up a small team of experienced retired health and social care professionals who are willing to link directly with individual families and offer support when they receive a diagnosis followed by help and advice whenever they may need “someone to come alongside” - not to take away the problems but to help them cope with them.

Secondly, we are to be part of a new way of to help families who have to cope with fact that someone they love may have dementia. We know how this feels and the need for someone close that they can turn to for advice and information, but and by far most importantly, someone to talk to who will listen and understand. Suffolk County Council and NHS Suffolk is funding a new approach which places the emphasis on supporting local communities to “be there when you need them” and to “get on and do something” to help make things better. The consortium, that we are a member of, has been successful in its bid to lead the future dementia advisory and support service for Suffolk. This will not significantly change what we do, but it does mean that we will be a partner in a network of dementia friendly communities, dementia alliances and projects like ours which will have access to, and support by, Sue Ryder and other professional agencies when needed. It is pretty much the model that we have been suggesting since almost the beginning, and a significant step forward in the Social Services and NHS thinking. It's unlikely to be perfect and certainly will not be anywhere near enough to "solve the problem", but it is a start.

Finally, I want to say extra special thanks to: Stephen Mckie (our very own “Music Man”) for making our Carers Club Christmas party such a success: Sue Holifield and her friends for our delightful “Project Angels” in the Church (I hope you managed to visit the exhibition): Christine, Barry, James and all at Abbots Hardware for donating the proceeds of their Christmas Draw to the project: And to so many others who have supported us throughout 2016 with their donations, time, and support.

So here's to 2017 – **Happy New Year** – With best wishes, Lynden
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